

Report a concern about accessing information from a public body

1. Details of the organisation your concern is about

Organisation: **Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)**

Contact name:

Address: **Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London**

Postcode: **SW1P 3JR**

Telephone: **0207 238 3256**

Email:

2. Your relationship with the organisation

Citizen, environmental NGO

Eg client, patient, customer etc.

3. What is your concern?

Select the option that best describes your concern.

- The organisation did not respond to my request
- The organisation refused my request
- The organisation sent only some of the information I asked for
- The organisation took too long to send it
- Something else. Please give details.

Please send us copies of:

- your information request; and
- any acknowledgement or other response you have received from the organisation.

4. What have you done to raise your concern with the organisation?

Made an official complaint

Please send copies of any documents you have showing how you raised your concern with the organisation.

5. What did the organisation say?

Our correspondence with Defra's Head of Information Standards and his response to our complaint is attached. It states:

1. "no notes, minutes, action points exist" of a telephone conversation which took place between the ABC and Defra's Agri-tech Strategy team on 10th June 2013. We continue to find this response surprising and would like access to the outcomes of this discussion.

2. The "15 April 2013 – email from ABC Message on media suggestions" was sent us in error and therefore we are not entitled to a review of whether the redactions meet the public interest test. We disagree with this finding and maintain our view that only the names should have been redacted.

3. In the "8 February 2013 – email to GM team from Monsanto" an attachment or other information (referred to "as discussed") appears to have been omitted, as does any follow-on to this discussion. We are not satisfied with Defra's response that no further information exists.

4. Defra confirms the meeting Lord de Mauley was offering the ABC was never set up. Yet it is silent on the meeting between the ABC and the Rt Hon David Heath MP (then Minister of State) which took place in January 2013 "To discuss role of agri-biotech including GM, in the UK and particularly food security and economic opportunities" (according to Defra's ministerial meetings list which has now been published on: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/212312/defra-min-transparency-1213-q4.pdf). Not only did Defra not reveal this meeting to us in response to our original request it now states: "An email origination [sic] from Assistant Private Secretary to David Heath and circulated to a number of Defra officials was withheld under regulation 12(4)(e) of the EIRs. Also withheld under the same regulation was an email circulated internally about a meeting with Agricultural Biotechnology Council - Summary and Questions". We do not accept that the public interest test has been applied correctly in this case and request access to both these documents.

Government discussions with the biotech industry regarding genetically modified crops and foods raise issues of significant public interest, including environmental protection. GeneWatch UK therefore continues to believe that these documents should not be withheld.

Finally, although Defra has apologised for the substantial delay in handling both our original request and our complaint, we remain concerned that the effect of this delay has been to hide important conflicts-of-interest and corporate influence on environmental policy from public scrutiny and debate.

Please send copies of any documents you have showing the organisation's response to your concern.

6. Reference number

Please tell us any reference number that the organisation has given you, eg account number, policy number etc.

RFI 5439/5589

7. Your details

Or, if you're filling this in on behalf of someone else, put their details here.

Title: **Dr**

First name: **Helen**

Last name: **Wallace**

Address: **GeneWatch UK, 60 Lightwood Rd, Buxton**

Postcode: **SK17 7BB**

Daytime telephone: **01298-24300**

Email: **helen.wallace@genewatch.org**

Who should we contact? (if different from above)

We will use the contact details above unless you would prefer us to deal with someone else. You must send us a signed authority for us to deal with them on your behalf.

Title:

First name:

Last name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Email:

8. Declaration

- I have included all the necessary supporting evidence.
- I understand that the ICO may need to share the information I have provided so they can look into my concern. I have indicated any documents or information that I don't want the ICO to share.

- The information I have provided is accurate, to the best of my knowledge.
- I understand that the ICO will electronically store the information relating to my concern including the documents I have provided and keep the electronic records for two years, or for longer if it is appropriate. The ICO will destroy the original hard copies after six months.

I agree.

9. Sending your form to us

By email

1. Fill in this form and save it to your computer.
2. Open a new email, with 'Concern about accessing information from a public body' in the subject line.
3. If you have all your supporting documents electronically, attach them to your email.
4. Email the completed form to casework@ico.org.uk

By post

If you have only paper copies of any of your supporting documents, print this form and post it with all your supporting documents to:

Customer Contact
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF